

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Robert Roloson Houses

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

3213 - 3219 Calumet Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

VICINITY OF

1st

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Ralph Metcalfe

STATE

Illinois

CODE

17

COUNTY

Cook

CODE

31

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Cook County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

STATE

Illinois

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Illinois Historic Structures Survey

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

1800 South Prairie Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

STATE

Illinois

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This is a group of four party-wall residences designed to seem from the street a single building. The lot size of each is 20 x 125 feet. Originally there was a range of buildings behind them facing on King Drive (formerly South Park) but these were removed when South Park was widened into a boulevard in the mid-twenties.

Foundations are stone while all exterior walls are solid brick except the street front which is brick trimmed with dressed limestone. Originally there was a paved terrace in front of each house surrounded by a stone and terra-cotta balustrade. The roofs are slate at the front where they rise in steep gables and flat behind the transverse gable. A buff Roman face-brick is used on the front, Chicago common on the other outside walls, and white glazed brick in the light court. Windows are mostly counter-balanced sash throughout. Those facing the light court from the stair hall originally had clear leaded glass in them.

Each house has about 900 square feet of basement and about 3000 square feet of living space above. The major architectural feature of the interiors are the 18 foot square stair-halls that rise up to large skylights. Each has a fireplace at the first floor level and is defined by stair railings, the balusters being plain pieces of wood, square in plan, rotated 45° to produce a diamond shape in plan.

The floor levels are staggered front to rear like Belgian townhouses of the period. Entry is at ground level past a reception room, and past a door to the basement, and up to the hall at first floor level. From the stair hall there is an arched passageway that passes a library seen through Ionic columns in wood and leads to a dining room, pantry, rear stairs and kitchen. At the front, a half level above the first floor is a living room and fireplace. On the bedroom level the sleeping and bath rooms repeat the shapes of the rooms below. Under the front gable is an additional room at attic level.

There are fireplaces in the hall, library, reception and living rooms. A central heating plant served each house. Ceilings are very high with about a three foot crawl space boxed in under the roof and second floor.

### History

The Roloson Houses were designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1894 for Robert W. Roloson, son-in-law of Edward Waller, Wright's River Forest patron. In its massing and major subdivisions, the design is reminiscent of English Tudor architecture, becoming popular at the time as a revival style. Onto this historic type, Wright grafted his own geometric detailing learned from his master Sullivan, whom he had left the year before.

The houses were built by Roloson as an investment and in their compact plans and narrow widths, they followed the precedent of other row houses in Chicago. The regularity of their facades is, however, less common in the Chicago of 1894 of irregular Queen Anne and Romanesque row houses. Wright's spatial treatment with open stairwell beneath a skylight and the different levels of front and back is also unusual.

As the area declined, the houses were divided into apartments. Wright buffs and antique hunters stripped away the front balustrades. Although only one of the houses is presently occupied, a southside banker who owns two of them and is acquiring the other two, plans to restore them as single family residences.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1894

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Frank Lloyd Wright

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

These houses are of special interest as the only surviving row houses by Frank Lloyd Wright. As representatives of Wright's earliest independent work, they are also very important. Interior and exterior details are of the early partly contemporaneous, partly original types found in the Winslow House of the same year, and thus afford especially interesting evidence of the evolution of Wright's architecture. The emphasis on interior space is of significance as the beginning of this important quality in Wright's architecture.

